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MIDDLEBURY SCHOOL IN JORDAN RELOCATED TO MOROCCO AMIDST WAR IN REGION

COURTESY PHOTO / MIDDLEBURY SCHOOLS ABROAD

Due to the spill-over of the war in Iran, Middlebury schools abroad have decided to move students at the school abroad in Jordan to the Morocco program.

By KAI ARROWOOD
News Editor

On March 2, Secretary of State Marco Rubio posted a video message on X, formerly known as Twitter, encouraging Americans in the Middle East to monitor updates following the initiation of "Operation Epic Fury." The travel advisory for Jordan, which typically rests at level two — "exercise increased caution" — was bumped up to level three, "reconsider travel."

The following morning, Middlebury's Schools Abroad office

Continued on Page 2

Middlebury alum writes speeches for New York City mayor Zohran Mamdani

By MANDY BERGHELA
Editor in Chief

When Julian Gerson '18 first tried his hand at speechwriting, he was sitting in an English class at Middlebury College, drafting what he imagined might be a hopeful speech in the wake of Hillary Clinton's 2016 loss to President Donald Trump.

Nearly a decade later, Gerson is writing speeches delivered from one of the country's most prominent political stages: New York City Hall. He now works as the director of speechwriting for New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani.

Mamdani rose to the mayoralty after several years in state politics. Before becoming mayor, he served as a member of the New York State Assembly, representing the 36th district. During his time in the Assembly, Mamdani built a public profile around housing policy and labor rights, often advocating for policies aimed at addressing the city's cost-of-living challenges.

Gerson joined Mamdani's campaign as political director in March 2025. After Mamdani won the Democratic primary in July 2025, defeating former New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, Gerson transitioned into the role of director of writing for the campaign.

Although the role marked a major step in his political career, Gerson said his interest in politics began much earlier, taking shape during his years at the college.

"A lot of my writing developed at Middlebury, and a lot of my political interest there," Gerson said in an interview with The Campus. "It was the start of my political reckoning."

Gerson arrived at Middlebury in 2014 with an early interest in politics and some initial campaign experience. While still in high school, he worked as an intern on

Continued on Page 2

The Middlebury Campus named 2025 New England College Newspaper of the Year

The Middlebury Campus won the 2025 New England College Newspaper of the Year award in the college division of the New England Better Newspaper Competition. The contest is hosted by the New England Newspaper and Press Association (NENPA), which holds an annual convention to bring together and honor the best newspapers and news websites in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine and Rhode Island.

Former Editor-in-Chief Madeleine Kaptein '25.5, former Business Director and Sports Editor Ting Cui '25.5 and current News Editor Rachelle Talbert '28 attended the NENPA convention last weekend in Portsmouth, NH and received the award for The Campus at the ceremony on Saturday, March 14.

"It's very meaningful to be recognized for our staff's hard work," Kaptein said. "The issues we submitted for review were our special Election Issue and Zeitgeist Issue from last school year, which I think are especially representative of The Campus's willingness to go the extra mile in our reporting. We had a great time with the Addison Independent staff at the conference and are grateful to them for encouraging us to come learn about the journalism industry in New England and receive the award in-person."

The Addison Independent won numerous first place awards within its circulation category, including first for General Excellence.

Judge's comments on the papers' entries will become available later in the week.

'WAR IN IRAN' PANEL DRAWS OVER 150 ATTENDEES

AVERY MURCH / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Panelists at the War in Iran forum from left to right: Ata Anzali, Sebnem Gumuscu, Febe Armanios and Caileigh Glenn. Moderator Ian Baucom.

By YUVRAJ SHAH
Managing Editor

On March 12, four faculty members hosted a panel titled "War in Iran: Faculty Perspectives," organized in response to the airstrikes across Iran by the United States and Israel beginning on Feb. 28th. The panel included Caileigh Glenn, assistant professor of political science; Febe Armanios, professor of history; Sebnem Gumuscu, associate professor of political science; and Ata Anzali, associate professor of religion.

The panel was moderated by President Ian Baucom, and the panelists spoke to an audience of over 150 students, faculty, and staff.

"We wish we didn't have to have panels like this, but it is one of the vital energies, capacities, and responsibilities of a place like Middlebury to engage," Baucom said as he opened the panel.

Each panelist spoke for roughly eight minutes, providing perspectives on the war and its wider impact in the region. Glenn — who focuses on research in international relations and foreign policy — spoke first, highlighting the factors at the international, domestic and state level that may have influenced the United States and Israel to attack Iran. She described the long-changing levels of threat perception the U.S. has had towards Iran, which have increased following President Donald Trump's 2018 decision to end U.S. participation in the Iran Nuclear deal.

Glenn also commented on the Israeli-U.S. alliance, saying: "Israel's proximity to Iran, its ideological differences, its historical legacies of violence all contribute to a different and perhaps greater perception of threat that Iran poses to Israel than what it poses to the United States."

She discussed the changing role of the US military in the world, citing the rebranding of the Department of Defense to the Department of War. "We are turning from a posture of defense to a posture of warfighting," she said.

Armanios followed and provided information about the role of US domestic Christian evangelical movements in creating an ideology that supports conflict in the Middle East. She argued that for many US evangelical followers, Iran represented an antithesis to Christian life and a symbol of the apocalypse. "Middle Eastern wars were markers and even progenitors of a specific Christian prophetic timeline".

"The current U.S. Secretary of

Continued on Page 3

NEWS

SGA launches 'Know Your Rights' campaign
By COURTNEY COUDEN

PAGE 4

LOCAL

Town Hall Theater to host Grammy nominated mandalin trio
By DYLAN MCGINTY

Cabin fever series returns to American Flatbread
By ELLA STEERE

PAGE 5

OPINIONS

Of a Ramadan under rubble: A response to the war on Iran
By ZAHRA MOEINI MEYBODI

The privilege of being taken seriously: The contested presence of women in academia
By KATHERINE GOODMAN

PAGE 6

ARTS & CULTURE

A rejuvenated Harry Styles embraces his inner free spirit
By PHOEBE ADLER

Water under the bridge: Visiting architect Aurelie Floret
By LIZI SCHIERMAN

PAGE 8

SPORTS

Middlebury ski programs seventh at NCAA championships
By VICTOR KORTE and SIMON SCHMIEDER

Burnt rubber and school records: Sophia Will '26
By SIMON SCHMIEDER

PAGE 11

MIDDLEBURY SCHOOL IN JORDAN RELOCATED TO MOROCCO AMIDST WAR IN REGION

Continued from Page 1

notified students in Amman, Jordan, that the program would be relocated to Rabat, Morocco.

"It was confusing because [Marco Rubio's communication] wasn't official, so we had to go a little back and forth on that," Bill Mayers, assistant director of international programs, said in an interview with The Campus.

By March 3, Rubio's message had spread widely across social media. Despite the lack of formal State Department communication, the college's study abroad office decided to relocate students out of caution. By Thursday night, all seven students in the Jordan program were en route to Morocco, where Schools Abroad secured housing.

Of those seven, only one is currently matriculated at Middlebury. Students will continue two content-based courses with their Jordanian professors over Zoom, while the residential coordinator in Morocco will take over the colloquial Arabic class, and Morocco's program director will teach the standard Arabic class. Both the program director and the residential director at the school in Jordan remain in Amman.

Although Jordan's civilian areas have not come under significant fire, Iran has struck some of Jordan's military infrastructure, and Jordan is listed as one of the U.S. partners that is currently being targeted by Iran. The U.S. embassy in Iran has since encouraged all "non-emergency" U.S. citizens to leave the country as soon as possible.

The Middlebury school in Jordan is the only school abroad that specializes in Levantine Arabic, a dialect spoken by over 60 million people in Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon and Southern Turkey. Although students will continue taking online classes with Jordanian professors in Levantine Arabic, they will no longer live in homestays that speak the dialect.

"I was more drawn to the Levantine Arabic, because it's a lot more compatible to other dialects," Alistair Nalle '26.5 said, who studied in Jordan last spring and worked with the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies last summer.

The Middlebury School Abroad in Jordan was founded in 2011. As of the fall 2025 semester, the school had been in operation for 15 years. The Jordan program was opened after the closure of Middlebury's school abroad in Alexandria, Egypt, which was shuttered after the Arab Spring in 2011.

After the Oct. 7 attacks and the start of the Gaza War, the Middlebury Schools Abroad administration began discussions about potential backup plans in case the conflict escalated.

"We were then viewing Morocco as a backup if things heated up for Jordan," Mayers said. "[The school in Morocco] assured me that they would be ready to welcome students from Jordan if that was needed."=

Nalle found the experience in Jordan incredibly welcoming.

"I think the Western media tends to illustrate that part of the world as a giant sand dune with constant issues," Nalle said. "But it's a lot safer than people think."

Jordan — and Middlebury's program in Amman — has historically been a stable location for study abroad. The country maintains strong ties with the United States and a culture of hospitality toward international students.

For Liam Morris '26, studying abroad in Jordan challenged most people's perceptions of the region.

"All we learned about the Middle East was 9/11 and radical terrorism," Morris said. "I feel like I had a gut intuition that that was wrong."

Although Jordan's population is predominantly Sunni Muslim, many students are placed with Christian host families. Morris lived with a multigenerational Muslim family, where he helped children with English homework and spent hours in daily conversation.

"Arabs are among the most hospitable people in the world, especially [my host family], and just wake up to make my life better," Morris said. "I really felt like I was part of their family after, and I didn't really expect that."

The relocation to Morocco is expected to be temporary. Administrators plan to decide by early summer whether to reopen the Jordan program in the fall. If conditions remain unstable, Morocco will serve as an alternative site.

"We envision Jordan reopening, but the future is a bit murky right now," Mayers said.

10 students have been admitted to the program for the fall semester. If Jordan does not reopen, they will have the option to study in Morocco instead.

"Students weren't happy about having to leave, but there's no way the college could have kept people there in good conscience," Mayers said.

Middlebury alum writes speeches for New York City mayor Zohran Mamdani

Continued from Page 1

the mayoral campaign of former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, gaining an early introduction to the dynamics of political campaigns.

At the college, Gerson pursued a major in political science, where he took a number of courses with faculty such as professors Bert Johnson and Matthew Dickinson, both of whom he said played an important role in shaping his academic interests as he began to consider a career in politics.

"I think the first class I took at Middlebury was Intro to American Politics with Professor Johnson," Gerson said. "It was in the large Gifford classroom, and I remember feeling excited by it — learning how elections work and thinking about the different dynamics at play."

Johnson recalled Gerson as a student who stood out for his ability to bridge theory and practice.

"Some students know a lot about politics but stumble with academic political science; others are good at political science but don't know as much about practical politics. Julian excelled at both," Johnson wrote in an email to the Campus. "He wrote an excellent senior thesis on the role of the White House Chief of Staff that was informative and fun to read – and that I've thought about a lot in the years since he graduated, in light of successive Trump, Biden, and Trump White Houses."

Outside the classroom, Gerson was active in several campus organizations, including serving as editor-in-chief of the now-defunct satirical magazine, The Crampus and communications director for the Middlebury College Democrats (MCD). His time at the college also coincided with the 2016 presidential election, which he said became a formative political moment.

"My junior year was when Trump won his first term, and the campus really felt it," Gerson said. "It motivated a lot of us to get involved. I knocked on my first doors for Hillary [Clinton's] campaign with other Middlebury students, met Vermont representatives like Senator [Patrick] Leahy. Vermont is such a great place to develop a political interest because the state is small and politicians are willing to come talk to students."

Gerson was also active in organizing. After the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, Gerson founded the organization, Middlebury Students Against Gun Violence, in which he helped organize a large student walkout in solidarity with the national movement for gun reform, working alongside students from Middlebury Union High School.

"It was an amazing opportunity to see how organizing actually works — how you can bring people together to speak out about something that matters to them," Gerson said.

After graduating in 2018, Gerson went on to work in the House Judiciary Committee for a year before transitioning into a full-time career as press secretary and speechwriter for US Congressman Jerry Nadler, another native New Yorker. That path eventually led him to New York City politics, where he worked on Mamdani's campaign.

After Mamdani won the mayoral election in Nov. 2025, Gerson transitioned into the role of director of speechwriting, helping shape the mayor's public messaging. The position requires close collaboration between the two, as Gerson states that Mamdani remains deeply involved in crafting the speeches he delivers.

"The first word I would use to describe the work is partnership. We're very fortunate to have a mayor who cares deeply about the speeches he gives and how he presents himself to the world. He's very thoughtful and curious about the world around him. He's also a NESCAC guy, so maybe the liberal arts education has something to do with it — even if he went to the far inferior NESCAC school," Gerson joked, referring to Mamdani's alma mater, Bowdoin College.

That partnership, Gerson said, shapes every stage of the speechwriting process. Mamdani delivers remarks frequently as mayor, and for routine speeches, the turnaround can be quick. Gerson and his team typically draft remarks the day before, which Mamdani reviews and revises.

"We'll write a draft as a team and go through it together," Gerson said. "He might say, 'Change this here, add this message there,' but those tend to be smaller adjustments. For the big speeches, I'll give him six or seven drafts, and then we read them out loud together."

Capturing that voice, he said, requires a deep understanding of how Mamdani thinks and communicates.

"As a speechwriter, you get pretty intimately acquainted with somebody's mind," Gerson said. "I've worked with him for a year now and listened to him talk hundreds of times. Eventually, you start to understand what governs his thought process, and it becomes second nature."

Gerson said his approach to speechwriting is shaped not only by political experience but also by the interdisciplinary education he received in his undergraduate education.

"I also loved art history, and I took a lot of art history classes," Gerson said. "Politics is part of everything. You're studying art history and seeing trends in Dutch painting in the 1600s, the colors, the still lifes, and those reflect economic dynamics at play. A lot of the work we try to do with the mayor is to write different kinds of speeches, ones that speak intimately to what New Yorkers care about and draw on parts of history or the city that others might not invoke."

Gerson said Mamdani's speeches resonate in part because of their consistency.

"He has these very clear convictions that haven't really changed," Gerson said. "He knows who he is and what he wants to do."

That clarity, Gerson said, is what makes speechwriting both challenging and meaningful, translating a set of values into language that resonates with thousands of people at once.

Nearly a decade after drafting his first speech in a Middlebury classroom, Gerson now writes speeches delivered from City Hall, drawing on the foundation he built as a student.

The Middlebury Campus named 2025 New England College Newspaper of the Year

COURTESY PHOTO / NENPA

Madeleine Kaptein '25.5, Ting Cui '25.5 and Rachelle Talbert '28 with the Addison Independent after receiving the 2025 New England College Newspaper of the Year award on behalf of The Middlebury Campus. The award plaque is now in The Campus office in Hepburn Hall.

'WAR IN IRAN' PANEL DRAWS OVER 150 ATTENDEES

Continued from Page 1

Defense, or is it Secretary of War, sports a crusader tattoo across his chest, and the first crusade's battle cry, Deus vult, God wills it, is inked on his bicep." She ended by noting that these evangelical movements have believers who are embedded in the current administration. "The loudest drumbeat for Armageddon has the deepest roots right here, in our own backyard."

Following Armanios, Gumuscu discussed the United States' and Israel's desire to achieve regime change in Iran and cautioned that the war may not lead to such change, including institutions, security forces, elite unity, and divisions within the opposition. Citing the advanced age of the now assassinated Iranian leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, she argued that "the question of succession was already a part of conversation in the Iranian regime, a topic of conversation, explicitly or implicitly. And the elite was already getting ready for that moment of succession. So this does not come as a shock to the system."

She contributed by discussing that the war will not lead to the US and Israel's desired regime change in Iran: "The war is likely to produce a united elite who are now under substantial pressure, and they need to come together, and they need to stand united."

Panelists also noted that the war may blur the boundaries between the Iranian government and its people, of whom it does not enjoy universal support.

"As much as people that I know are opposed to the Islamic Republic, meaning the government, when you are faced with a kind of foreign invasion like this, then you know, those boundaries become less clear. Is this an assault on the government, or is it inevitably going to involve people?" Anzali said, in an interview with The Campus.

Armanios also warned that the attack on Iran should be examined differently from other American regime change wars. "Iran has a really strong sense of its history. It was home to important ancient and premodern empires and resisted prolonged direct colonial rule prevalent in the Arab Middle East. This is an important marker of pride," Armanios said in an interview with The Campus.

"The fact that the Iran-Turkey border has remained stable since 1639 speaks to the deep continuity of the Iranian state, despite its turbulent politics," Gumuscu said in an email to The Campus. "The fact that the Iran-Turkey border has remained stable since 1639 speaks to the deep continuity of the Iranian state, despite its turbulent politics."

Gumuscu ended her segment by connecting the war in Iran to concerns about democratic backsliding in the United States and Israel: "The US Congress basically surrendered its authority to declare war to an executive who turned overreach into a daily practice. So for the last year or so, we have seen Donald Trump's administration very much amassing substantial power in his hands, and now we see the external impact of that democratic backsliding."

During the question-and-answer session, Gumuscu shared a Feb. 28th Ipsos survey that revealed fewer than 27% of Americans supported the war with Iran.

The war with Iran is likely to create domestic tensions in the United States. "Beyond feeling the cost at the gas pump, Americans will also likely face rising prices for goods that are shipped to the U.S. due to industry-wide effects of shipping insurance price increases," Glenn said in an email to The Campus.

The final panelist, Anzali, opened by expressing his apprehension to participate in the panel: "This war has directly impacted my family and, as such, it is an emotionally charged topic for me to discuss." Anzali spent the first 30 years of his life in Iran and has most of his extended family there. He relayed stories from his father's sighting of bomb shrapnel falling in Tabiz, Iran and his childhood memories of seeing leftover shrapnel and bullet casings from the Iran-Iraq war.

Anzali continued by speaking about the nature of war for Americans. "Protected by two oceans and the most powerful military in history, Americans have the unusual privilege of discussing war from a distance as a spectacle."

"I believe the current war with Iran is a child of the marriage between imbecility and arrogance," Anzali added.

Anzali also commented on the difficulty of gauging support for these strikes in Iran, citing the government's crackdown on the internet. "As difficult as it may be to imagine, there are people inside the country who believe that this war might help bring about a better future."

Following the panelists, the forum shifted to a question-and-answer session, moderated by President Baucom. Alpana Bakshi '26 asked the panel about domestic pressures against the war: "Will the autocracy in the U.S. ever push far enough for the U.S. peoples to want to push back?"Gumuscu first responded, describing the role of the United States in destabilising the region with the invasion of Iraq in 2003, which caused a power vacuum in the Middle East.

"The coalition that Trump built to come to power is also fracturing because of this war, right, so there's significant criticism of what he has been doing," Gumuscu said.

Another student asked the panel if the US-Israeli strikes on Iran should be described as unprovoked, citing Iranian economic, political and military aggression in the region. Gumuscu first responded, describing the role of the United States in destabilising the Middle East.

"[Iranian actions are] not a provocation. It's actually how American miscalculation created a huge momentum in the region," answered Gumuscu.

Glenn added to this answer, reflecting on the now failed nuclear talks between Iran and the United States.

"There [were] no American nuclear scientists or nuclear energy officials who were accompanying the negotiators," she said.

The event was well attended, with students sitting on the floor and in the aisles.

"I am Iraqi myself, and I think we are witnessing this second cycle of American aggression in the region. I am personally affected by this conflict, and I wanted to hear different perspectives. I am very satisfied with the amount of expertise that has been presented," Manar Al-Rikabi '26 said.

"It was really nice to have President Baucom there. In all the panels I've done since I started working here in 2004, we haven't had a president participate. It signalled that this is important, and that we as a community are experiencing something quite traumatic," Armanios said in an interview with The Campus.

"The Middle East, and Iran specifically, is a subject that gets flattened into talking points very quickly in public discourse. A panel brings together people with different expertise, different lived experiences, and different analytical frameworks, and forces those perspectives into conversation," Gumuscu added in an email to The Campus.

SGA LAUNCHES ‘KNOW YOUR RIGHTS’ CAMPAIGN

By COURTNEY COUDEN
Contributing Writer

On Wednesday, March 11, students entering and exiting Davis Family Library had the chance to pick up Student Government Association (SGA)-produced ‘Know Your Rights’ cards, ask questions and have conversations about student rights and safety on campus. The drop-in table lasted from one to nine p.m. in the Davis foyer and was part of Know Your Rights Day, an event hosted by the SGA and Firewall, a Middlebury student group dedicated to protecting student rights.

To accommodate students’ schedules, organizers structured the event as a casual, drop-in space. The day also featured a Q&A session with immigration lawyer Dan Berger from four to five p.m., accessible both in person and via Zoom.

According to SGA President Nicole Meyers ’26, the event emerged from collaboration between SGA and Firewall following an earlier student government open forum. Firewall members had raised concerns that Know Your Rights cards were not distributed last year, prompting ongoing conversations between the two groups.

For the campaign, Firewall compiled the information included on the cards, which outline students’ rights when interacting with federal law enforcement and provide guidance for encounters with immigration officers on campus. SGA coordinated printing and distribution.

The Davis table was staffed by both SGA and Firewall representatives, creating an opportunity for collaboration and student engagement.

“I think now we’re getting off on a very positive foot, you know, actually taking action, and I think it’s really great that we can come and collaborate on this,” First-Year Senator Dylan McGinty ’29 said.

Organizers said the event aimed to encourage conversations about student rights and provide accessible resources for navigating situations in which students may feel their rights are at risk.

Immigration concerns have become more prominent for some students following the reported terminations of visas and deportations of international students in early 2025.

“I think something that’s happening nationally is that we see a lot of people being too afraid to have conversations,” Laila Almefty-Hernandez ’26, who is involved with Migrant Justice at Middlebury, said. “So, people are isolating themselves with their fears and their anxieties, and I think that different efforts of the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] and Know Your Rights cards in different campaigns like that get these conversations started so people aren’t so afraid by themselves […] And I think it just, like, provides an easy window for conversation.”

Equipping students with knowledge of their rights and resources, such as Know Your Rights cards that they can always carry, ultimately empowers them, according to Meyers.

“One of the big parts for me was making sure that students knew exactly what their response would be if there was a federal immigration official on campus, which there has not been yet,” Meyers said. “So I think for us it was really about just sharing the information as widely as possible. So that way, students feel safer because in this circumstance, particularly, the information will give students more power.”

Moving forward, Know Your Rights cards will continue to be available to pick up in the Anderson Freeman Resource Center (AFC) and the Prism Center. Additionally, through the SGA Immigration Legal Support Fund, a collaboration among Meyers, the SGA Senate, the Student Access Support Grants Office, and immigration lawyers, students can now access up to $1,500 in legal aid and immigration advice.

“Even if it’s uncomfortable to talk about it, I think that at the end of the day, we had a lot of really positive interactions with students. We were very glad. They were like, ‘Oh, we’re so happy that you had these cards out,” Meyers said.

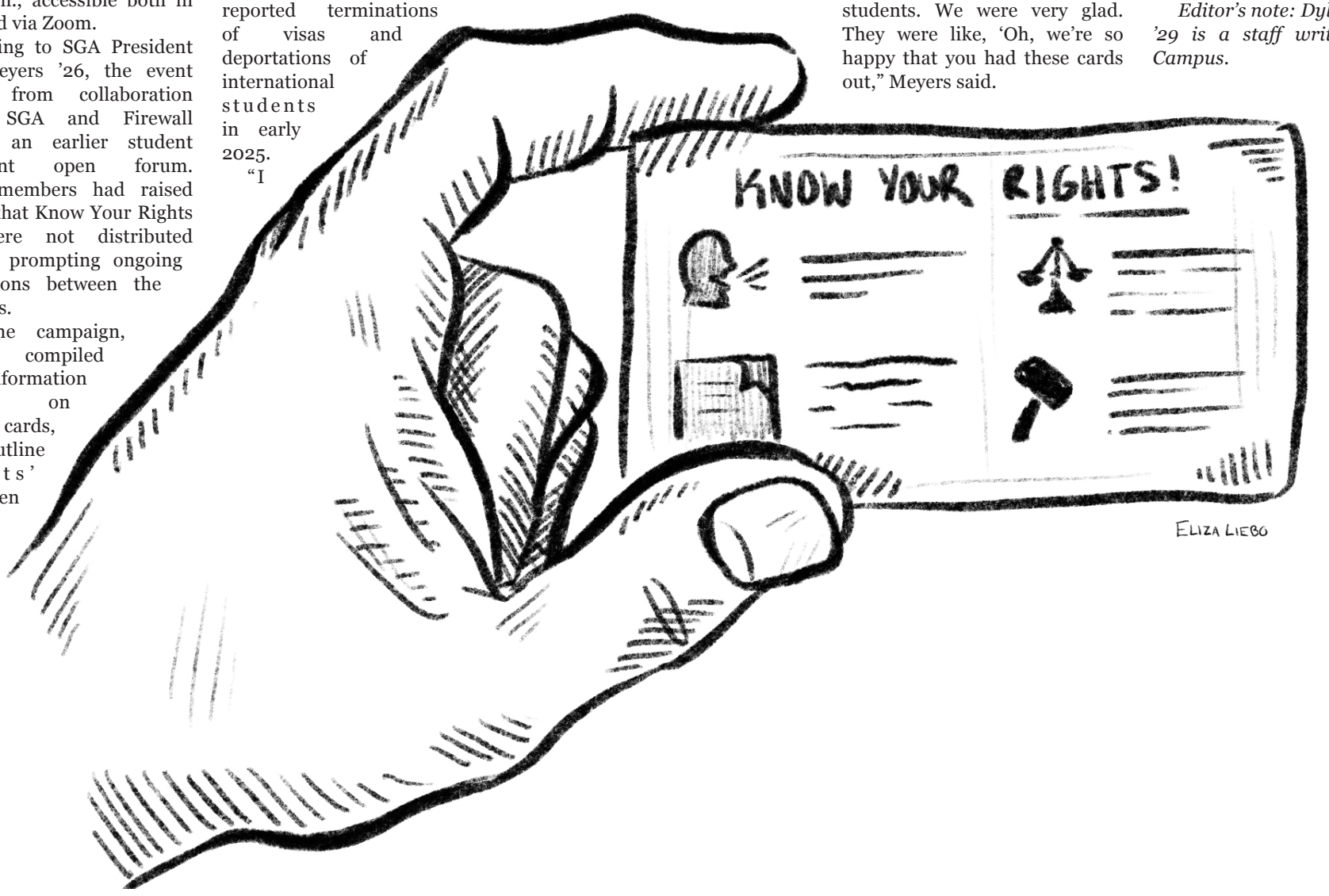
Beyond Know Your Rights Day, SGA and other student groups plan to continue supporting migrant communities. One upcoming initiative is a collaboration between Migrant Justice at Middlebury and Migrant Justice Vermont, scheduled for March 20.

The event will include a farmworker convention, and organizers are seeking student volunteers to assist with childcare and transportation from six to nine p.m.

“We’re trying to find more people to get involved,” Almefty-Hernandez said. “Whether that’s helping with transportation or watching kids while families attend the meeting.”

SGA leaders said they hope to continue collaborating with Firewall and other student organizations to respond to student concerns and expand access to resources.

Editor’s note: Dylan McGinty ’29 is a staff writer for The Campus.



TOWN HALL THEATER TO HOST VERMONT MANDOLIN TRIO FEATURING GRAMMY-NOMINATED PERFORMER

By DYLAN MCGINTY
Staff Writer

On March 27, the Town Hall Theater (THT) will host the Vermont Mandolin Trio, a local band featuring Grammy-nominated performer Matt Flinner alongside Jamie Masefield and Will Patton. Described in a press release by the THT as "the intersection of Bluegrass, Roots, and Jazz," this show features a unique blend of music performed by celebrated mandolinists.

Opened in 1884 with a masquerade ball, the building that is now home to the Town Hall Theater, has served many important roles in the Middlebury community. Originally the town hall, the building was later converted into an opera house and commercial space.

After the structure fell into disrepair by the 1990s, a community-driven fundraising effort raised $5 million to restore it. Completed in 2008, the THT now stands as a state-of-the-art venue for the performing arts. Continued support from patrons and partnerships with local organizations such as the college, continue to contribute to its success, which brings artistic energy and talent to the town.

The performing Mandolin Trio is influenced by a variety of genres, owing to their extensive experience with other bands. Flinner has been a devoted Bluegrass performer for years, spending decades playing in the Matt Flinner Trio and Modern Mandolin Quartet. In 2013, he was Grammy-nominated for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance for his 2012 album "Americana."

Patton, a college alumnus, has opened for Van Morrison, Ray Charles, and a collection of other musicians in previous bands. Masefield, who specializes in New Orleans jazz, toured the United States with the Jazz Mandolin Project from 1996 to 2006 and works as a dry stone mason in Monkton, VT. All three members currently reside in Vermont and have performed in venues across the state.

"A major draw of the event is Grammy-nominated Flinner, a virtuoso musician, who also happens to be a resident of Ripton. He's also a really nice guy –– and this whole band radiates great energy that electrifies the room," Lisa Mitchell, the theater's Artistic Director wrote in an email to the Campus.

The mandolin, an instrument that became popular in the U.S. during the 1880s, is now mainly associated with bluegrass and other folk music; the band often improvises and incorporates elements from different genres to experiment with the mandolin and craft an exciting, distinctive performance.

"Join the trio for a unique take on…well, whatever they decide to play," reads one of the band's promotional advertisements for the event at THT.

This open-ended performance style is an iconic characteristic of the band, which aims to provide a laid-back, enjoyable experience for its audience.

The trio returns to the Town Hall Theater this March by popular demand, having played previous shows in recent years to sold-out crowds.

Mitchell, who sources talent for THT, maintains a network of local and regional artists to accomplish the theater's goal of providing entertainment and culture to Middlebury.

"For live music curation, I attend major conferences designed for presenters like me, such as Folk Alliance International, which this year featured 900 international bands. Many of the artists I saw there are now booked to come to THT in 2026 and 2027," Mitchell explained.

TOWN HALL THEATER / COURTESY PHOTO
The performing Mandolin Trio band is influenced by a variety of genres, owing to their extensive and unique experiences in various other bands

"On a more internal level, I think the value of theater in general is that its an art form that is perpetually exciting to see," Keziah Wilde '24, associate director of the Center for Learning and Engagement (CLE) at THT wrote. "Every day we are bombarded with videos, podcasts, television, and edits but it is rare to see something where the performers are truly there WITH you, attempting to engage with you. You are there in the room with the show you are seeing. It's not behind a screen and it's not from a day ago or a week ago or 10 years ago. You are experiencing something that you won't be able to experience again and that hasn't previously happened. And that is rare for entertainment these days."

While THT is known for performances on its main stage, Mitchell notes that the theater also hosts intimate performances in the 1,430-square-foot Anderson Studio, which accommodates up to 150 guests. The Anderson Studio is part of the New Wing of THT, which opened in the fall of 2025.

Among the studio's upcoming highlights is an April 19th performance by Katie Martucci, a singer-songwriter celebrated for her remarkable vocals. Martucci has previously appeared on "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon", earning recognition similar to that of Grammy-nominated Flinner

"Since I've been at THT, I've started a range of music series (in addition to other wide ranging, multidisciplinary programming). These include House of Jazz, the Summer Sounds outdoor music series, the P.M. Sundays Folk Series, and the Wintertide music series. I also receive hundreds of solicitations for artists of all kinds each year that I review and consider," Mitchell wrote.

Although the Vermont Mandolin Trio's performance occurs during the College's spring break, Mitchell highlighted THT's role in bringing students and the local community together, emphasizing accessible ticket options for the upcoming performance:

"We would love to have students join us for this concert, and for them to know that discounted and free tickets are available via THT's Cady Fund. A student can call the box office or come to the show and ask for a Cady Fund ticket. This fund exists in support of all of the shows at THT," she wrote.

Appreciation for THT is frequently expressed within the Middlebury College community.

"The theater was always meant to be a place for all; it hasn't always been what it was meant to be," Cole Silpe '29 said. "In Middlebury, it's just that and more: a place for any member of the community to lose themselves in another world, return feeling 'maybe my world is not so different, after all,' and see the faces of their life in a new light."

LIVE MUSIC, COCKTAILS AND BAKES: CABIN FEVER SERIES RETURNS TO AMERICAN FLATBREAD

By ELLA STEERE
Contributing Writer

The second annual Cabin Fever Series (CFS) has returned to American Flatbread in downtown Middlebury. Featuring live music and specialty cocktails, the series invites community members to gather and enjoy performances by local bands and artists every Saturday through March 28, while supporting local charities.

This year, the Cabin Fever series opener was Kait MD, a cover band that focuses on a mix of old and new rock and pop covers.

Darren Patnode, the drummer for Kait MD, described the atmosphere of their recent performance as perfect.

"A bunch of our fans came, and the food and drinks are top- notch, and the overall experience is just, in my opinion, the perfect creative environment," Patnode said. As well as communal, he added that the crowd is very diverse. "[Attending] gives you the chance to get to hear different types of music and experience it with different types of groups of people."

The CFS started in the winter of 2025 and expanded into February and March this year.

Danielle Boyce, the owner of American Flatbread, noted that part of the motivation for this event was to provide opportunities for community gathering during the winter.

"This year, we decided to include February as well, because, you know, that can be a sort of dreary time for some," Boyce said in an interview with The Campus.

Alicia Pierson, head bartender at American Flatbread for four years, said the event aims to bring people from the community together for some festivity during the winter months.

"[The event is] trying to get people to engage and just not feel so closed off to everything," Pierson said.

To find bands for the first Cabin Fever Series, the staff typically reaches out to local performers or groups that had previously played live music at the restaurant, including Grateful Dead cover band The Morning Dudes, who played for the CFS on February 28th

Tom Van Sant and his partner Jake Geppert, two members of the Morning Dudes, have been performing together for about nine years. The pair has performed at American Flatbread in the past, but only outdoors in the pavilion.

"There's not a whole lot of live music in this town in the wintertime, especially as a musician, I'm just grateful to [American Flatbread] that they did the series," Van Sant said. "This was a really fun, really fun gig. It's a super cool place. Generally speaking, food is fantastic. The staff's great. So it's a pleasure."

Van Sant also mentioned that the owner and manager, Danielle Boyce, adds to the energy, leaning into their Grateful Dead nostalgia, even sporting tie-dye accessories for the performance.

Pierson also creates drink specials at the bar, specifically for the series.

"I kind of tune into the music to do themes," Pierson said. "For example, we had Mardi Gras, so I based my menu off of that."

The changing drink menu offers an additional reason for the community members to come out and try something new at a Middlebury restaurant, while enjoying live music.

"The main reason we do the event isn't just necessarily music. It is to get the community more involved with each other and not feel like they have to be closed away during winter," Pierson said.

The Cabin Fever Series also takes place alongside the restaurant's 'Benefit Bake' program.

Every Wednesday, from 4 pm to 10 pm, a portion of the restaurant's revenue is donated to local organizations. $4 for every large flatbread, and $3 for every small, is donated to participating charities.

The 'Benefit Bake' has been occurring since 2002. Participating charities can set up a table and have representatives from their organization hand out informational material and raise money for their goals.

"We've been doing [the] benefit bake since 2002 when we opened [...] it's a night where we invite the community in to support a cause," Boyce said.

The 'Benefit Bake' is an important event for American Flatbread and has recently provided an opportunity for customers who are increasingly seeking to give back to their community.

"I think also a major part of why I kind of conceived of it in the first place was not just to get them out, but to ignite their spirit, I guess. People's spirit, my spirit, you know, everybody in the climate," Boyce added. "We're really trying to focus on organizations like the NAACP or Addison Islands or, you know, anybody who's really supporting members of our marginalized community. I think we had Women's Aid in there."

The next 'Benefit Bake' is on Wednesday, March 18, and is in support of Addison Allies, an organization that supports and assists migrant workers residing in Addison County.

Clara Dellenbaugh '28, a student at the college, attended the Cabin Fever Series last weekend.

"When I went to Flatbread last weekend, the live jazz band gave the whole restaurant a really nice and uplifting atmosphere. We really loved the ambience while we ate, and it was nice to see other members of the community enjoying the music," Dellenbaugh said.

The upcoming artists performing this Saturday, March 21, are Rick Redington and Tuff Luv, a country and folk band that has performed around the Northeast. In advance of the event, their music is available on their website and on Spotify.

Editor's Note: Managing editor Yuvraj Shah '26 contributed reporting in this article

VIOLET WEXLER / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Group Adam and the Orbits peform at American Flatbread as part of their second annual Cabin Fever Series on March 14th

OF A RAMADAN UNDER RUBBLE: A RESPONSE TO THE WAR ON IRAN

Op-Ed

Zahra Moeini Meybodi *is an Associate Muslim Chaplain and Interfaith Advisor.*

The last time I wrote for The Campus was in Ramadan 2024. I wrote a piece on the famous Persian-speaking Muslim poet Rumi and his passion for fasting in this month. Two years have passed, and I find myself writing again during Ramadan. This time, however, my pen can hardly string words together on anything sacred, as I find the cultural inheritors of Rumi's world, my friends and families in Iran, living in fear and terror of an illegal, unprovoked war against them.

This Ramadan's spirituality and sanctity has been shaken for many Iranians, Lebanese, Palestinians and Muslims in America and around the world. This war of choice against Iran took place in the midst of nuclear negotiations, soon after an interview with the Omani mediator and foreign minister who expressed optimism regarding its progress.

Starting for the first time in June 2025, and now again, I find myself in a state of shock and paralyzing grief, fearing for the safety of my family and friends there as many others within my community and campus do as well. The Iranian Red Crescent Society has said that within the past two weeks more than 50,000 civilian infrastructures have been destroyed, and more than 1,400 civilians have been killed, with up to 3.2 million displaced. The purpose of this unpopular, unapproved and unconscionable war remains unknown to many of us in the US.

This year's Ramadan has been mired in bloodshed for me and for many with roots in the Middle East/West Asian region. The "Middle East" is often assumed to be a region where violence, for some reason, erupts senselessly and without reason. It is never assumed that perhaps we have something to do with it, whether through our acts of invasion, legitimization of violence in our political discourse using dehumanization of hijab-wearing Muslim women or everyday American Muslims. All this is manifested in the everyday speech of the top echelons of our leadership, where even Congressional voices can make outrageously Islamophobic statements without consequence or censure. Representative Randy Fine has said: "If they force us to choose, the choice between dogs and Muslims is not a difficult one," and Andy Ogles recently stated, "Muslims don't belong in American society. Pluralism is a lie." Such statements, when normalized, both build the groundwork for legitimizing mass violence against Muslim-majority societies and attacks against American Muslims back at home. We remain at the margins of American society while many in the US feel geographically and psychologically distant from this violence, these kinds of attacks have and will trickle into loss of civic freedoms for all Americans eventually.

The month of Ramadan that is meant to teach us the beautification and stillness of the heart before God is now witness to the dismembered limbs of 175 Iranian school girls in Minab being hurled in the air by US Tomahawk missiles. The imposition of chemical warfare covers Tehran's skies with cancer-inducing benzene and black rain through the bombing of an oil depot. World heritage sites like the Golestan Palace and the Naqsh-e Jahan Square in Isfahan have also been bombed, erasing cultural memory and heritage that Iranians so deeply cherish as a 6,000-year old civilization. But more than buildings, it is the human and psychological toll of this violence. Today, I have fasting friends and family whose only safe distance from a bomb is the measure of one street, living with shaken buildings and shattered windows and an exhausted prayer on their thirsty tongues. These are people whose lives have been beleaguered by decades of maximum pressure US sanctions that have led to the country's economic destabilization, civic-rights suppression, and militarization of ruling institutions as a whole. Now the possibility of losing their lives and loved ones in an aggressive war that is not their choice hovers above them every day.

Promised liberation by force and the belligerence of bombs, Iranians are being promised an ironic type of safety and future. We are witnesses, potentially, to another forever war the likes of Iraq or Afghanistan, as explained in a conversation between Senator Bernie Sanders and several Iranian-American political commentators, only now on a much larger and more severe scale that risks the lives of Iranian, American and Israeli civilians. More immediately, my family and friends in Iran are promised a future that envisions not freedom, but an undermining of their national sovereignty, state collapse or even civil war/balkanization. We are speaking, in any of these scenarios, about the mass-scale slaughter of everyday civilians who simply want to have bread on their table, a job to wake up to, a person to love and a child to joyously bring into this world for a more just and purposeful future. This is the dream of every American as well. And yet, every day Americans must see their hard-earned dollars and taxes be once again funneled into endless violence and inflated prices, instead of programs of social upliftment, mobilization for our civic freedoms, and the redemption of our standing on the international stage and in a rules-based world order.

This Ramadan, unfortunately, I cannot analyze the lofty ideals and poetic metaphors by Rumi and his celebration of Ramadan's intimacy with God. This time, I am remembering Rumi in a different light — that he wrote in the midst of the mayhem and violence of the Mongol invasion throughout Persianate lands where he was nurtured, turning him ultimately into a refugee and later a masterful poet for the world to remember. I, too, must write amidst the ruptures and ruins of an imposed war, during Ramadan. I must speak against the desacralization of life, and continued demonization of Iranians and so many Muslims, both inside and outside of the US. I must speak against the reproduction of Islamophobia or antisemitism as a result of such events. I must speak against this unconscionable trend that we continue to fall back into, again and again, as a nation. Perhaps, I must speak as Rumi did in his "Divan-e Shams", saying:

> "Don't say everyone is at war
> What good would
> my making peace, do?
>
> You are not one,
> You are a thousand.
> Kindle your own light!"

Perhaps, like Rumi, this speaking out and against bloodshed is the most sacred thing I can do this Ramadan.

IN A TIGHT JOB MARKET, SENIORS NEED TO SHOW SKILLS (NOT JUST MAJORS)

Op-Ed

Nicole Veilleux, Tracy Himmel Isham, and ***Tim Mosehauer*** *are all staff at The Center for Careers and Internships.*

This piece has been written by staff members at The Center for Careers and Internships. For students of the class of 2026 preparing to enter a competitive job market, getting an early start on the job search can help you navigate an increasingly competitive landscape.

Hiring has become more selective, and many employers are changing how they evaluate candidates. Increasingly, they are focused less on GPAs and majors and more on specific skills applicants can demonstrate. According to the latest Job Outlook 2026 survey from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), 70% of employers report using skills-based hiring, up from 65% last year. At the same time, only 42% screen candidates by GPA, down from 73% in 2019, and more than 80% list key skills directly in job descriptions.

In other words, employers are scanning applications for evidence of skills, not just academic credentials. For Middlebury students, this is an opportunity if you know how to show what you can do.

What Skills-Based Hiring Means for Liberal Arts Students

Skills-based hiring is a recruitment approach that evaluates candidates based on demonstrated competencies such as critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. Instead of relying primarily on degrees and GPAs, employers look for examples of how applicants have used these skills in real situations. That means experiences students gain through research projects, internships, campus jobs, student organizations, study abroad, athletics, and community engagement matter more than ever.

CCI advisors say this shift can work in your favor. "Middlebury students are gaining these skills every day through coursework, experiential learning, and leadership roles," said Alicia Gomez, Associate Director, Career Advising at CCI. "The key is learning how to talk about those experiences in a way that clearly shows employers what you can do and the impact you can have."

Common Résumé Mistakes Students Make

Advisors say many students undersell their experiences on their résumés. Common mistakes include listing responsibilities instead of results, writing generic bullet points that could apply to anyone, leaving out numbers or measurable outcomes, including a skills section that doesn't match the job description, and sending the same résumé to every employer.

For example, a résumé bullet that reads "Worked on a research project" doesn't tell an employer much. Hiring managers want to know what problem you worked on, what actions you took, and what changed because of your work. Specific results help employers see the skills behind the experience.

Why Interview Stories Matter

The focus on skills becomes even clearer during interviews. Employers frequently ask behavioral questions designed to reveal how candidates think and work in real situations, such as asking students to describe a time they solved a problem, faced a challenge on a team, or had to adapt quickly.

These questions are designed to uncover how candidates apply their skills more than learn what courses they took or positions they held.

The STARR Method for Stronger Interview Answers

CCI advisors recommend using the STARR method to structure interview responses. This framework helps candidates turn experiences into clear, compelling stories by walking through the situation, the task or responsibility involved, the actions taken, and the result. The final step, reflection and relevance, explains what was learned and how that experience connects to the role being pursued.

Preparing for Skills-Based Interviews

You can prepare for this type of hiring process by identifying three to five skills listed in a job description and then selecting experiences where those skills were demonstrated. These examples can come from coursework, internships, research projects, or campus and community involvement. Students should build a small "story bank" of experiences that can be adapted to different interview questions and practice telling those stories out loud to improve clarity and confidence.

You can also practice responses using CCI's Big Interview platform, which records answers and provides feedback.

Understanding how skills-based hiring works can give you an advantage. NACE research shows fewer than 40% of graduating seniors say they are familiar with the concept.

The Bottom Line

Skills-based hiring places less emphasis on credentials alone and more on what candidates can demonstrate they are capable of doing. For Middlebury students, that means the experiences gained through coursework, internships, leadership roles, research, and campus and community involvement can all serve as evidence of the skills employers want.

In a competitive market, starting now and clearly connecting those experiences to the skills employers seek can make a significant difference in a job search. Need help getting started? Log in to your Handshake account to schedule an appointment with a CCI advisor today.

Editor's note: Himmel Isham, and Mosehauer are senior associate directors at The Center for Career and Internships (CCI). Veilleux is the assistant director of communications and outreach at the CCI.

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MOVING AWAY FROM THE PHOTOSHOOT: CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE EVERYWHERE

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

On March 9th, 55 students arrived at President Ian Baucom's house in style, sporting blazers, collared shirts, khakis and even ties. The students did not fail to follow the strict business-casual dress code, which explicitly stated: "Dress code is business casual — no jeans and DEFINITELY [emphasis not added] no sweatpants." The event was the third installment of the joint meeting series of the Middlebury College Republicans (MCR) and Middlebury College Democrats (MCD). The Editorial Board commends this meeting as a step in the right direction for a campus that is politically polarised, reflecting the mood across the country. But we also wondered about the future place of these meetings, and considered how to bring this dialogue into more authentic settings.

The intended objective of the meeting was to facilitate uninhibited and constructive political dialogue between those with conflicting perspectives. It provided an organized forum for open debate among peers.

The joint meeting was guided by a number of questions, some relating to campus and others tackling deeper, more contentious topics. Students were asked questions like, "How do we make Middlebury synonymous with academic freedom?" and "Is the American Dream still alive?" Although some topics resulted in more heated debate, the conversation remained relatively civil. These are thought-provoking and relevant questions, but the Editorial Board wondered whether they brought any real results or led to anything of substance. Some members of our board, who attended this meeting, argued that it was a gathering of already moderate people who engage in political discussion across party lines in their daily lives.

The greater challenge the College faces is getting those on the fringes of the political spectrum to listen to and talk with each other. Ironically, those who self-select into these meetings might not be the people who could benefit most from them.

The Editorial Board noted another problem inherent to these types of organized meetings. Constant advertisement and praise create a paradox that can become self-defeating. Excessive promotion of conversations like that between the MCR and MCD undermines the ability of open conversations to extend beyond contrived settings. Conversing with people with different perspectives should be the expectation, not a rare occurrence requiring over-publicization. PR, to some extent, is acceptable, but Middlebury should focus more attention on normalizing open dialogue among the entire student body. It does not have to be narrowed down to a select group of students.

However, the Board unanimously agreed that these meetings are generally constructive. Discussion is a worthy end in itself and need not produce anything tangible to have an impact. Creating outlets for expression does not require justification. These meetings are a step in the right direction, especially on a campus that struggles with its national image regarding free speech and the perception of silencing certain voices.

Middlebury College is a liberal institution with the majority of students leaning left on the political spectrum. This can create an environment where conservatives feel siloed off from their peers and unable to express their opinions for fear of backlash. These meetings can help send a message that free speech can and should exist on our campus.

We hope these meetings signal a shift in campus culture. One where political discussion can happen in dorms, classrooms, and dining halls. Dialogue should be organic and natural and not strictly dependent on these manufactured and catered environments. Middlebury needs to foster a community where everyone feels safe to share their opinions.

However, the Editorial Board notes an important distinction between political discussion and an attack on personal rights. No one's safety or identity should be questioned under the guise of free speech. Certain things do not constitute political conversation, and there is a balance between stating one's political perspective and maliciously tearing down another person. We appreciated that the questions discussed at the joint meeting did not open arguments about people's rights to exist.

The Board did not agree as to whether these meetings normalize harmful ideas. We did agree that at a left-leaning school, conservative students do face some social backlash. However, we did not agree on whether this backlash indicates a supposed lack of free speech. One member of the Editorial Board mentioned that asking Middlebury not to platform anti-trans activists is not suppressing freedom of speech, but facing the reality of a college where two students have died by suicide in 3 years.

At their core, conversations are better than not having any, even if they do not produce agreement. Speaking with people face-to-face forges a human connection that can elicit empathy, and this mutual understanding should not be overlooked. College is the time to explore and grapple with new and unfamiliar ideas, using a diverse range of perspectives for leverage. Rather than simply reinforcing our own beliefs through interactions with like-minded individuals, we should extend outside of our comfort zone and reach out to the other side of the political aisle. This holds true beyond Middlebury, especially in the current political climate, where bipartisan efforts have become a relic of the past. There needs to be a broader reflection on how we view and talk to each other.

To encourage campus-wide intellectual debate at the joint meetings, these conversations need to happen outside President Baucom's house. They need to take a physical foothold in our day-to-day interactions, whether this happens in the classroom or in simple conversations in the dining hall.

On The Campus' part, we don't intend to report on these meetings again – we hope to see them become a more normal part of the Middlebury experience.

The privilege of being taken seriously: The contested presence of women in academia

Op-Ed

***Katherine Goodman** is a member of the class of 2028.*

Sunday, March 8th, was International Women's Day. In Anne Hathaway's speech to the UN on International Women's Day, she delivers, "We come together in tribute to the hope and the work and the grit of those who have not yielded to cynicism, who leave the candle of our collective faith in the importance of justice ever-lit." As undergraduate female students, resisting cynicism can be challenging.

I discovered this when I attended an open discussion on political partisanship in the U.S. government. I enjoyed it and understood it. I thought carefully about my question and enthusiastically raised my hand: "What do we do now that we are at this point? And is there a way to forecast when and how we could come together?" I was met with sharp looks, whispers, and subdued laughter. With a sneer, the presenter retorted, "You would know that if you took my class. Moving on..." I demurely murmured, "Sorry, I am not a political science major."

After the talk, I brought up this occurrence to my friend, who is a political science major. "There's an emphasis on sounding smart rather than actually trying to learn from the question," she told me, and it is "a constant pissing match trying to display how much you know." She then revealed a more sinister undertone: "Men often take a tone of condescension against women in the class."

I don't think I asked a dumb question. While the boys' questions were met with nuance, statistics, and critical thinking, mine were met with dismissal and mockery. My presence felt burdensome.

This experience reflects a broader reality that women continue to face in academia.

There is no doubt that in recent decades, women have entered more academic fields than ever before. Over the past 20 years, women have been 15 times more likely to be elected to institutions such as the National Academy of Science (NAS) and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS). Yet these gains can be misleading. Bias still shapes women's experiences. Among NAS members, men, on average, had 14,000 more lifetime citations than women. As women move up the academic ladder, they are often underrepresented and underpaid.

Women may now be in the room, but the path to the top is still built for men.

This is partially the fault of tradition. Most academic institutions and research centers around the world have historically been founded by men, who continue to hold senior academic positions. As a result, many academic environments still operate according to norms established by men — unwritten rules that disadvantage women. Language reflects these rules, with research showing that men and women in advanced academic careers often describe themselves using traits traditionally coded as masculine, including independence, self-confidence, and a willingness to take risks and initiative.

In academia, many important decisions happen informally — they are not strictly reached in meetings; they can happen at the coffee machine, at dinner, or at the bar after work. Men often conduct business through informal networks, where conversations and relationships can quietly manipulate outcomes to their advantage. Women, on the other hand, tend to rely on formal procedures, bringing their ideas to meetings only to discover that the decision has already been made elsewhere.

To project authority in a male-dominated industry, Elizabeth Holmes, founder and CEO of Theranos, intentionally lowered her voice to a deep baritone. Her family claimed it was natural, yet her former colleagues noted it was fake, slipping back to a higher pitch when in private or drinking. Deeper voice tones add credibility to leadership, revealing the gender bias embedded in perceptions of authority. Being taken seriously is a privilege, and sometimes that recognition is all it takes to create the one opportunity that transforms a career.

In this way, some of the most successful women emulate the masculinity of their environment and even perpetuate stereotypes of young women in the process. Known as the Queen Bee Phenomenon, female faculty members are more likely than male faculty members to hold stereotyped views of young women and to underestimate their career commitment early in their academic and professional careers.

The laughter that hurt most came from a female counterpart in the front row.

After my experience, I felt cynical. Maybe I brought up a class joke or concept they had already discussed ad nauseam. These are both viable possibilities. But I still felt small — a feeling I hope not to feel again, though I anticipate I will. Being taken seriously should not be a privilege. Yet in many academic spaces, it still is.

COURTESY PHOTO / CATHERINE GOODMAN

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"KISS ALL THE TIME. DISCO, OCCASIONALLY": A REJUVENATED HARRY STYLES EMBRACES HIS INNER FREE SPIRIT

By PHOEBE ADLER
Contributing Writer

It is without a doubt that Harry Styles is back — and feeling refreshed. After a two-year hiatus, the British pop phenomenon has returned with his fourth album, "Kiss All the Time. Disco, Occasionally." Following a three year hiatus after wrapping up his world tour in the summer of 2023, the former One Direction member has returned with 12 new tracks for an eager fanbase.

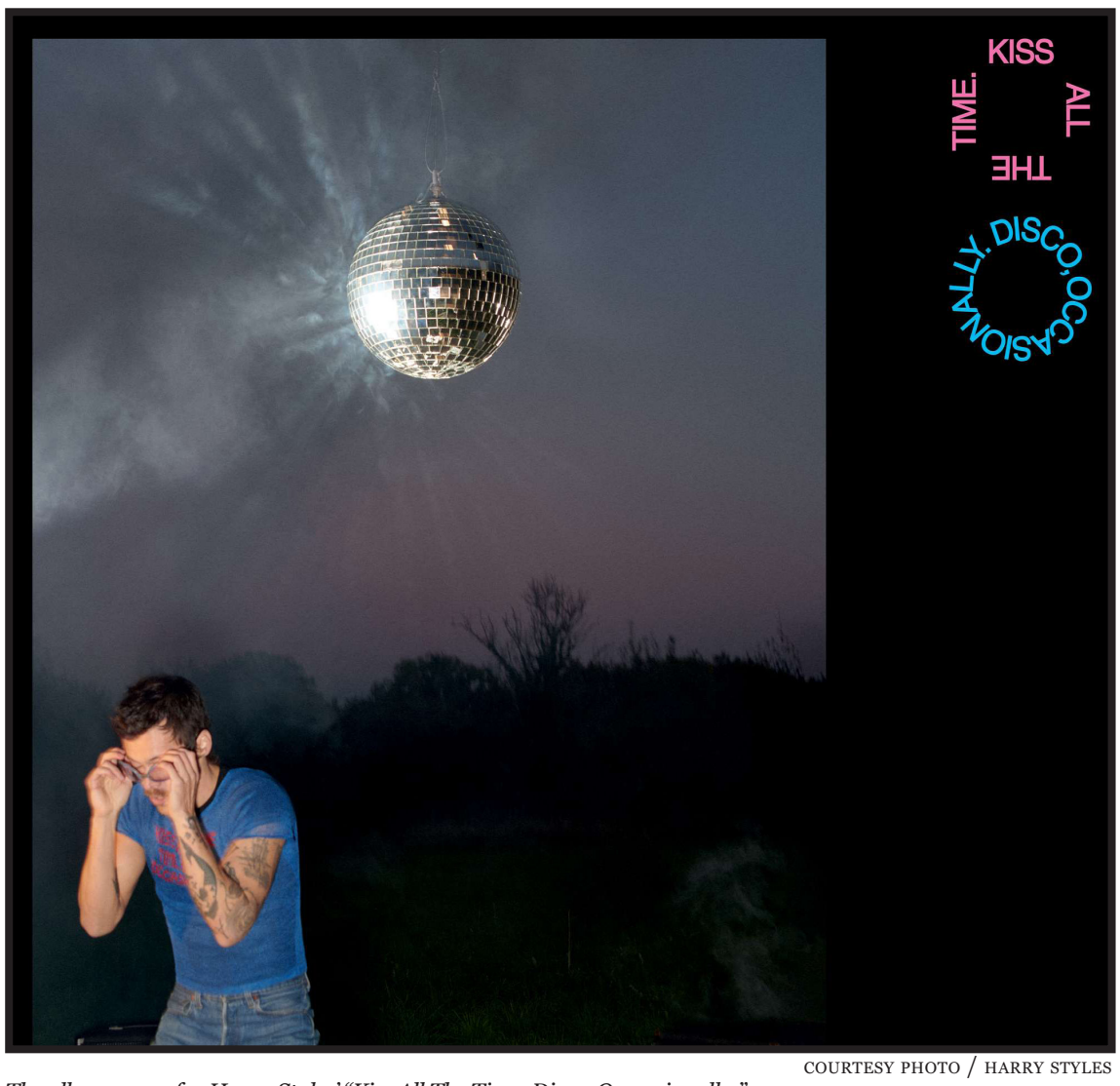
In a conversation with Japanese author Haruki Murakami for Runner's World, Styles, who rarely engaged with social media in his time off, provided further details about his travels, which included Japan, Spain, Germany and Italy. He mentioned being heavily influenced by the music of these locations, namely the dance clubs in Berlin, and the beginnings of what would become his new album, which fans are already referring to as "KISSCO."

"Good electronic music is so good, you know — especially the melodic aspect," Styles explained, "When you're out at night, it's such a community, but you're also watching people have such individual experiences...I wanted to recreate [what] I had on the dance floor, being lost in instrumentation and the musicality. It was so immersive, like, this is how I want to feel when I'm on stage too. I don't want it to feel like a sermon I'm delivering. I wanted it to feel like we're in this music together. Like I'm in it with you."

Much of Styles' album encompasses these exact feelings. From the repetition of the lyrics "We belong together" in his first song "Aperture" to the wide range of instruments and sound effects in "Ready, Steady, Go!", one practically feels transported to the dance floor while listening, including Styles himself. His performance of "Aperture" at the 2026 BRIT Awards, which includes a hefty dance break, has been viewed over four million times. Viewers can see the joy on both Styles' and his dancers' faces. It is clear that he is thrilled to be back to performing.

However, it is not all "Coming up Roses" (see track 8) for Styles, as numerous media outlets have criticized the new album for aspects including incomprehensible lyrics, general disorganization among tracks and a lack of a clear message behind the album. British news organization The Telegraph rated "KISSCO" 3/5 stars, with chief music critic Neil McCormick claiming the album has "all the emotional heft of a perfume advert," and New York Times pop music critic Lindsay Zoladz describing the overall feel of the album as "a murky self-portrait that obscures as much as it reveals." Many critiques of this album have raised a question worth considering: What exactly is going on in this album? In classic Styles fashion, he begins with dance-centered hits, but balances it out with more somber tunes such as "The Waiting Game" and "Paint by Numbers." "KISSCO" encompasses a variety of lyrics, sounds and effects — but does it work?

I've been a fan of Harry Styles for almost 10 years now. I listened to "What Makes you Beautiful" on my iPod Touch more times than I could count as a child; when one of my now-best friends and I first met, we bonded over our love for his music. Upon seeing Styles' album announcement earlier this year, I was thrilled, and I counted down the days until its release. I agree with many reviews emphasizing the difference in sound on this album; however, my thoughts are a bit less critical.



COURTESY PHOTO / HARRY STYLES
The album cover for Harry Styles' "Kiss All The Time. Disco, Occassionally."

In reviewing this album, one could critique the organization of Styles' more exciting and more somber tunes, or the occasional inability to understand a song's lyrics. But while listening to this album, I found that it was exactly what I wanted to hear from Styles upon his return. The mixture of poignant orchestra and anthems that I'm sure I'll be singing along to in a week's time works well for me as a listener, and, as a result, the album comes off as some of Styles' most personal work yet.

In an interview with long-time stylist Harry Lambert for The Telegraph, Styles emphasizes how personal this album is, even comparing it to "an audio representation of a long diary entry." Styles seems to have found a lot of value in stepping away from music; in addition to his travels heavily influencing "KISSCO," so did his time spent relaxing. He mentions to Lambert that, "living my life in a way where I could really like who I am away from this world has been so powerful for me. Without question that has influenced the work I'm now making because it came from a place of pure freedom."

In addition to McCormick's specific comparison of "KISSCO," his review asks the reader: "Is Harry Styles the low-stakes hero we need right now?" Maybe not, but that does not mean that this is not a fun album to listen to. The music industry is well known to be demanding. Many artists today begin creating hits and do not stop until they are exhausted or their physical or mental health demands it. Take fellow British phenomenon Lola Young, for example, whose breakout hit "Messy" catapulted her to worldwide fame in 2025, immediately creating a busy schedule for the artist. However, the whirlwind of events and promotions caused a deterioration in Young's health.

In an interview with Rolling Stone, she explained this paradox: "You want to say yes to everything because everything's on the table, but then you also have to balance that with your mental health, and I've been super open about my mental-health condition that I suffer from, and also about all the other stuff that's going on for me."

That September, in the middle of her performance at New York's All Things Go festival, Young ended her set early after falling backwards and going rigid. Now, back in public life, Young is prioritizing her health, slowing down, and shifting her relationship with music. In the same interview, she explained: "One thing that's really helped me is slowing down, mentally, taking time to process...Days off, that's really important."

In an industry where so many artists begin creating music and often do not stop until exhaustion, it is refreshing to see a mainstream artist like Styles prioritize his own well-being and return with an album in which he emphasizes the enjoyment he had whilst creating it. While listening to "KISSCO," I often considered some of Styles' final words to Lambert: "When I listen back to the album, I can hear that I was having fun during this time. It's fulfilling to make something you're proud of." Styles' pure joy on this record is apparent, bringing to the listener as well.

Despite critiques, the BBC reports that "KISSCO" has topped the UK album charts, making it Styles' third time doing so as a solo artist. Perhaps we all need to have some of Styles' joy.

I believe "KISSCO" will remain a hit for a long time –– and deservedly so considering the strong influence Styles has on the pop culture world. While its songs have not made my top 5 list yet, I believe they will continue to grow on me and many others, whether they are dedicated fans since Styles' days on "The X Factor" or new listeners who heard one of his tunes on the radio. After all, who doesn't want to have a dance party on their walk to class?

WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE: VISITING ARCHITECT AURELIE FLORET

By LIZI SCHIERMAN
Layout Editor

Aurelie Floret is an architectural designer and an Assistant Professor of Architecture at Auburn University in Auburn, Ala. This past week, from March 9-13, she visited Middlebury through the Cameron Visiting Architect Program. The program offers a short-term residency for architects and designers, bringing together real-world professionals and college students.

Throughout the week Floret was in Vermont, she visited studios and guided students in their project development. She also gave a lecture about her work on Thursday, focusing on the relationship between infrastructure and water systems.

Floret was born in Paris but moved to Atlanta early in her childhood, alternating between Atlanta during the school year and her grandmother's house in southern France during the summer. The village she stayed in in France, Seillans, was hot and dry, which made her think a lot about water.

Floret also traces her interest in water systems back to these hot summers, when she would run down to the source with her siblings to dip their feet in some water to cool off.

"On the way to the source, there was a lavoir, a public wash house. That lavoir really stuck with me. It was a ruin from another era, now abandoned and overlooked, yet it revealed a way of thinking about water and infrastructure," Floret said.

After contextualizing her initial interest in water systems, she moved on to talk about how it has influenced her work. Floret currently has four grants funding various projects.

"I'm interested in water infrastructure in general and kind of spatializing water infrastructure, architecturalizing it. And I'm interested in drinking water infrastructure. That's like one bucket. Wastewater infrastructure, that's another bucket. And then coastal resilience is another bucket. So I have three different lenses through which I look at the problem, and so the solution is slightly different for everything," Floret added.

One of her projects began as a master's thesis while Floret was at Cornell and was later published in the "Cornell Journal of Architecture."

"This is proof that your theses can have a life after graduation!" she exclaimed during the lecture.

In the project, Floret focuses on the scarcity of drinking water in Los Angeles. The project is a design around the Silver Lake reservoir in the center of the Silver Lake neighborhood. In 2006, strict water quality standards were set, resulting in various water sources being removed from service or hidden underground. One of these was Silver Lake. In her proposal, Floret reactivates this currently deactivated water source and incorporates it into the urban landscape of the neighborhood, making the drinking water a part of the urban experience.

"You have to hide pipes because that's how you ensure their longevity and that they don't get contaminated by surface water discharge, et cetera. So it is important that they're hidden. But are there moments of this infrastructure coming up and being celebrated in the way that, you know, in Rome, sometimes water infrastructure would sort of come back out of the depths and announce itself. When things are hidden, people sort of forget. So, in a landscape where water scarcity is real, when a lot of places are facing water scarcity, can we start to visualize these things to create a relationship between people and their water infrastructure? And maybe people will invest in it a little bit more. They're also paying taxes for it, right? So how do they start to be more aware of what's going on? How do they start to, like, be in conversation with the infrastructure in a more active way?"

The effect of the French lavoir — an open, visible water source — on Floret's current work is evident in her desire to make water more present and visible in our lives. Floret presented sectional drawings of her work about Silver Lake on Thursday. Sectional drawings are technical illustrations that show a three-dimensional building as if it were cut in half vertically or horizontally. Most of her works were sectional in the vertical, in which she drew the infrastructure, the water, and people going about their daily activities. While this project is very important for conveying an idea about water infrastructure and starting a conversation about these issues, it has not yet been realized.

COURTESY PHOTOS /AURELIE FLORET

1. Aurelie Frolet. 2. "#2.1 Wet Dreams" by Aurelie Frolet.

Another project Floret is working on is a SOM Foundation Research Prize Project with Rural Studio. It concerns wastewater in Alabama's Black Belt region. Rural Studio is a design-build program within Auburn University based in Alabama's rural Black Belt. The Black Belt is a crescent-shaped area of about 20 counties in Alabama's midsection, known for its rich, dark, fertile soil. Most residents in these areas manage wastewater using septic tanks. However, the septic system is incompatible with the land, as the water has trouble draining in the unique soil.

Failing septic systems cause residents to struggle for extended periods due to the high cost of replacing tanks. Floret is working with other researchers, professors and engineers to create a manual for the residents of this area.

"It's sort of explaining that condition, drawing it so people understand it. It's giving them different media to help them understand the problem. Talking about wastewater alternatives, like showing different types of things you can do if your septic tank is no longer working. And then, how a town could be affected by a renovated septic tank. So if your town is now hooked up and you have wastewater capabilities, businesses can move in. Dollar General can move in because there's this whole new infrastructure now that was originally preventing economies from developing. So, once you have a place like Dollar General move in, something like that usually, how does that start to change the atmosphere of the town? How does it start to sometimes maybe take away the town's identity or architectural identity, urban identity? And how do citizens kind of maintain control over that stuff, too, right? How do they still have control over the future of their town based on these new updates?" Floret explained.

Many of Floret's projects, she explained, spark important conversations, but are simultaneously quite conceptual.

"That's the next step in my research — how do I start to architecturalize these things? I want to be able to propose a structure, and that's what I'm working on. That's the kind of tension I'm interested in exploring. And maybe one manifestation of that could be, for the Rural Studio Wastewater Project, is there a way that cleaning tanks can be celebrated and visible because it's an investment for the town? How do you create a kind of architectural space around it to celebrate it?" she said.

WET DREAMS: A HYDROLOGICAL SPECTACLE AT SILVER LAKE
VIEW FROM THE AQUEDUCT
In Hell too
There are, I've no doubt, these luxuriant gardens
With flowers as big as trees, which of course whither
Unhesitantly if not nourished with very expensive water. And fruit markets
With great heaps of fruit, albeit having
Neither smell nor taste.

YOU NEEDED THIS: M GALLERY HOSTS ZINE RELEASE PARTY

By CHRISTY LIANG
Arts & Culture Editor

The newly revived M Gallery has become a hub of alternative artistic and cultural events on Campus. Small, intimate and thoughtfully curated, the space invites art-centered dialogues and offers a refreshing respite from the often homogenous campus dynamic.

On January 22, Chaz Witter '28.5 hosted a release party for his zine "i needed this.," at the gallery. The event also encouraged participants to bring canned goods for donation to a local food drive. For a couple of weeks before the date, I had walked around campus, noticing the inscrutable poster with only "i needed this magazine" on it in a lot of places. I had wondered what it was for. When I finally sat down with Witter for a conversation about his artistic vision, the first question I asked him was about the name of his zine.

Witter read from his dedication: "September through December 2025 was by far the worst time of my life. I was drowning in stress, grief, and self-loathing to a degree. Between countless nights of slamming my door and crawling deeper into a hole I found myself in, a question my therapist asked me was running through my head. What do you do to unwind? When they asked me this, I didn't even know what to say. In my state, it seemed like I'd forgot how to calm down. It took some time to come up with an answer, but I realized it was so simple– creating things, whether it be sewing, drawing, making collages.

My life was completely void of all creative processes at the time. In response to this simple revelation, I labored for the next two weeks to make I needed this volume one. It was short, kind of crappy, but at the time, it was all I could think about.

A temporary distraction of sorts had given me an outlet for my feelings and time away from the bullshit of everyday life. I needed this volume two consumed the last three months of my life. I relished every moment of it. It's silly, it's colorful, and I had a lot of fun making it. I hope reading this magazine makes you want to go out and create something equally silly and colorful."

He went on saying, "To me, these magazines are more than a silly side project. Like, the whole point of the title was, I was going through a lot, and to kind of get out of that and take my mind off it and focus on something, I put all a bunch of shit together.

I made a bunch of art. And so, I needed that. And that's kind of why I made it. I think a lot of people are in a similar vein. It's definitely not like a crazy revelation to come to. Looking back on it, there's a lot of stuff I would have changed about it, but at the moment, I definitely needed to make this."

I noticed the loud aesthetic that seemed to characterize his visual language and was curious about the motivations behind it.

"I wanted it to kind of just be loud and in your face," Witter said. "I think people on this campus take themselves very seriously and almost too seriously, in my opinion.

This campus is incredibly homogeneous in a lot of ways, like make-up of backgrounds, but also like thought, clothes and hobbies and what people find cool. Like, you're gonna hear the same Noah Khan covers at Womp. Everyone's gonna be wearing exactly what I'm wearing right now.

I've even fallen victim to it. I wear a sweater and Blundstones every day. But I just kind of wanted to make something that breaks the monotony, if that makes sense. So I think even having a 2-hour release show with a magazine is gonna be, hopefully, just crazy. I'm really excited to hopefully bring something new and cool to the table."

Witter also mentioned the physicality of magazines as opposed to the transience of internet culture, which underpinned much of his enthusiasm about print media.

"I think a lot of people would just have always responded much stronger to magazines. They can hold a lot more lasting power than, like, a social media post and be a lot more iconic. And I feel like it kind of cements a certain time in history or has the power to encapsulate like a certain time and replay that time infinitely as long as the magazine is there. Like, people are gonna look back at that cover of Chris Jocelyn on Thrasher magazine and be like, that's an iconic moment of skateboarding. With social media, it's so easy to make something really cool and then just have it last a little bit and then just be gone. Especially with the constant flow of information and stimuli, magazines have an incredible power to just freeze for a moment. At least that's how I see it."

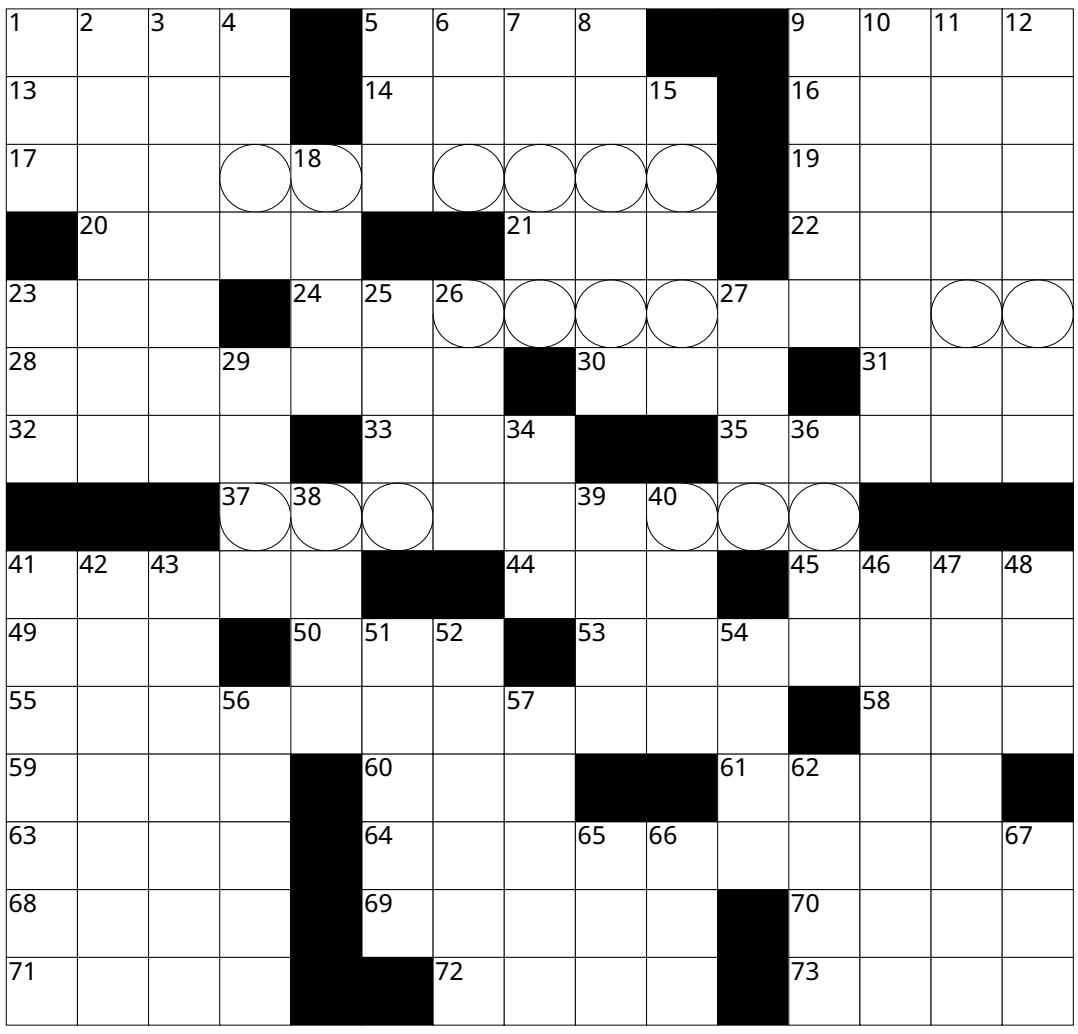
I NEEDED THIS
VOLUME No. 2
"THIS MAGAZINE CURED MY APATHY!"
"THE BEST PIECE OF PRINT MEDIA EVER CREATED"
RELEASE PARTY
THE M GALLERY 82 WEYBRIDGE ST
MIDDLEBURY, VT 7-9PM
THURSDAY 1/22

COURTESY PHOTO / CHAZ WITTER
The poster for Chaz Witter's "i needed this" magazine release party in January.

Looking forward, Volume III of "i needed this" is on the horizon and includes submissions from a variety of student artists. Here's to hoping for a burgeoning counterculture at Middlebury where more niche voices can be heard, and normative standards can be shattered, even just for a while.

Time off

Ella Charnizon



ACROSS
1 Brink
5 Flag maker Betsy
9 Part of UAE
13 Poses a question
14 Lead-in to bow or hike
16 Caramel-filled candy
17 *Speaking softly
19 Type type: Abbr.
20 "___, Brute?"
21 Extinct New Zealand bird
22 "Yikes!"
23 X-ray alternative
24 *Writing Middlebary, instead of Middlebury in mailing, for one
28 Corrupt
30 "Wheel of Fortune" purchase
31 Campaigned
32 SoCal school for the Aztecs
33 Hosp. test
35 Nebraska city
37 *Is growing, as a baby plant
41 Beachgoer's need
44 "Spy vs. Spy" magazine
45 The man, the ____ , the legend
49 Nail polish brand
50 Small battery
53 Make good as new
55 What starts for Middlebury students March 20th, or a what happens in three clues in this puzzle
58 When repeated, a classic candy
59 Three-___ sloth
60 "Do ___ say, not ..."
61 Squeaks (by)
63 Regarding
64 Magazine with cover exclamations like "Bigger Biceps!"
68 Pass out cards
69 Follow as a result
70 Pixar's "Finding ___"
71 Nile reptiles
72 Short-term worker
73 Beech or birch

DOWN
1 Crow's cry
2 Brought (in)
3 Ends of some winter sports equipment
4 "Hey! Over here!"
5 GPS suggestion
6 Rower's need
7 Penny-pinch
8 Lima lady
9 Hilarious
10 401(k) alternative
11 "Black Velvet" singer Myles
12 Site of Europe's oldest university
15 From square one
18 Adidas competitor
23 OB-GYNs, e.g.
25 2011 Best New Artist Grammy winner Bon ___
26 Zaire's Mobuto Sese ___
27 Like highlighter colors
29 Trick
34 Wrigley's product
36 Band with the 2008 song "Electric Feel"
38 Map out
39 Container weight
40 Concept
41 Tex-Mex order
42 Is against
43 Surveillance setup
46 Peak performer?
47 "I know what I'm talking about"
48 Clothes line
51 Best effort
52 Playing hooky
54 ___-Ball
56 Objects of worship
57 Wash off
62 "Critique of Pure Reason" philosopher
65 Total
66 A freshman dorm on campus, for short
67 Weed whacker

MIDDLEBURY SKI PROGRAMS CLAIM SEVENTH AT NCAA CHAMPIONSHIPS

By VICTOR KORTE AND SIMON SCHMIEDER
Staff Writer and Senior Sports Editor

After a successful Winter Carnival, Middlebury's skiers travelled to Utah to compete in the NCAA Skiing Championship. The event lasted four days and included the Giant Slalom and Slalom for Alpine, and the 7.5k Individual Classic and 20k Mass Start for Nordic skiing. Middlebury finished seventh overall with 254 team points after qualifying a full roster of 12 skiers.

An impressive performance by Julian Arthur '29 saw him clinch the second-fastest finish in the Slalom and put Middlebury, followed by Nicholas Unkovskoy '27, flying down Utah's Olympic Park and finishing third in the Giant Slalom. On the women's side, key performances included Kjersti Moritz '28, who finished sixth in the Giant Slalom, as well as Shea Brams '26, who came in 10th in the 7.5k classic Nordic race.

Although the Middlebury team was unable to challenge the powerhouse ski programs of the west, such as the University of Utah, the University of Colorado and the University of Denver, the Panthers provided a strong showing at the national meet. Middlebury sent the maximum number of athletes they could to nationals, produced multiple All-Americans, and was the strongest NESCAC performer by a solid margin.

"It was amazing to represent the Panthers on the national stage. Although conditions weren't exactly ideal, we fought hard and put down some respectable performances," men's Nordic captain Mason Wheeler '26 said. "Huge thanks to the coaching and waxing staff. We can't do what we do without the countless hours of their hard work."

Utah continued its dynasty by scoring 549.5 points and winning its sixth championship in seven years and 18th title overall. Middlebury performed well, although the Rocky Mountain Intercollegiate Ski Association (RMISA) programs in the West still dominate NCAA skiing owing to greater resources and their proximity to major training venues. The top teams from the East Coast, traditionally Middlebury, Dartmouth and UVM, usually battle for a place in the top 10.

Overall, the stunning second-place finish by first-year alpine skier Arthur is a promising sign for the future of Middlebury skiing. The Nordic team shares this hope as well.

COURTESY PHOTO / BRETT WILHELM

Nicholas Unkovskoy '27 was third in the giant slalom last Wednesday.

"It was awesome to be there with my teammate Finn, given we have three more years to work, adapt, and hopefully start beating those RMISA guys," Nordic first-year Nathan Doughty '29 said about his teammate Finn Veit '29.

"It was a fun and unique opportunity to go out there as a freshman, and it felt like being a little fish in a big pond. I think everyone who's going back is feeling excited to be bigger fish next year."

Middlebury's skiing ceiling is high. The Panther skiers leave Utah with momentum, experience and a clear next step: turning consistency into contention.

COURTESY PHOTO / BRETT WILHELM

Kjersti Moritz '28 finshed sixth in the giant slalom for Middlebury.

MIDDLEBURY BASEBALL DISPATCHES CASTLETON 7-0

By THEO MANIATIS
Sports Editor

As winter clings on in Vermont, Middlebury men's baseball brushed past Vermont State University Castleton, 7-0, last Sunday, bringing their record to 6–2. Hank Lloyd '29 threw six scoreless innings, and Henry Ayers '29 had three hits, his batting average dipping slightly to .680.

"It's about as hot a start as I've ever seen anyone have," Mike Leonard, the head coach, said about Ayers.

A single from Sam Gersch '29 brought home the game's first run in the bottom half of the first. In the second, Castleton struck out twice as both teams went scoreless. Then, in the third inning, the Panthers found their rhythm at bat.

Ayers scored off a fielding error, before a single by Andrew Baay '29 brought home Gersch (an unearned run because of an earlier wild pitch). Carter Chi's '28 triple soon made the lead 4-0, setting up Lloyd to take the mound with a comfortable lead.

"When [Lloyd] is on the mound, he exudes his own type of confidence, and he certainly has a lot of talent," Leonard said.

Lloyd struck out two in the bottom of the fourth, frustrating a Castleton batter who stormed off angrily, exclaiming words that are not fit to print, before banging his helmet in the dugout. "Why do we even come here?" one of the hitters quipped beneath his breath.

COURTESY PHOTO / JUSTIN WHITENING

Henry Ayers '29 was tabbed NESCAC player of the week following his performance against Castleton.

The chilly weather likely exacerbated the Castleton team's icy demeanor. There were not many fans, just a couple of parents and students huddled in the bleachers behind home plate. It was the type of afternoon where the most interesting thing to do was rate the batter's walk-up songs.

Gus Parker '27 strolled out to Mary Jane's Last Dance by Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers (10/10 song), and then hit a single to drive home Gersch, making it 5-0 for Middlebury. The sixth was Lloyd's last inning. He struck out his last batter looking, sending his teammates over the dugout fence to congratulate him on his impressive effort: six innings, one run, nine strikeouts.

Ayers notched his third hit of the afternoon in the bottom half of the inning. On Tuesday, he was named NESCAC Player of the Week. After the game, Ayers reflected on his strong start to the season: "I am really sticking to my approach and leaning on the mental side of baseball."

"I definitely worked hard in the offseason, so it's good to see it come to fruition during the spring," Ayers added.

Castleton threatened to upend the order in the eighth inning, loading the bases with two outs, but Christian Zebrowski '28 worked out of the jam with a strikeout. Dylan Knightly '26 retired the side in order in the ninth, sending Castleton home with a 5-10 record.

"Let's Do it Again," by J Boog started playing over the loudspeakers, the Panthers pouring out of the dugout to sing along — a tradition this season after home wins. Not even the overcast day could dampen this team's spirits.

"It's been a ton of fun," reflected Leonard on the season so far. "That's the word I keep using to describe this team."

So far, the Panthers' campaign has been highlighted by their promising first-year class and strong hitting, producing at least six runs in all but one game. The two losses were against Emory in Atlanta — a team that, thanks to Georgia's mild weather, had already been playing baseball for weeks before Middlebury's season could even begin. Up next, the Panthers head to Florida for spring break to play a string of games and prepare for conference play.

BURNT RUBBER AND SCHOOL RECORDS: SOPHIA WILL '26

By SIMON SCHMIEDER
Senior Sports Editor

In "Shoresy", a TV series that follows the fictional Sudbury Blueberry Bulldogs hockey team, the players often remind viewers that "goalies are always weird." Sophia Will '26, the starting goalie for Middlebury women's hockey, admits that being a hockey goalie does require a certain weirdness.

"I feel like you have to have some aspect of you that you'd choose to be in a position where people are shooting a rubber puck at you," Will said in an interview with the Campus.

Regardless of what is actually needed to be a hockey goalie, Will has it. Last Saturday, as the Panthers played Colby in the NESCAC quarterfinals, Will became the all-time leader in career saves in Middlebury women's hockey history. Playing over four hours and reaching triple overtime, Will also blocked 61 shots — three short of the most saves ever in a single game for the program.

Will's journey to becoming a goalie started when she was six years old.

Growing up in a city like Buffalo, NY, she found it natural that many of her peers played hockey in the streets and on the ice. Hoping to join the rest of the boys playing hockey in her neighborhood, Will convinced her parents to let her switch from gymnastics and allow her to start hockey.

"Everyone got a chance to play goalie because it was just a house league. I think I let in, like, 10 goals, but I thought it was so cool," Will said.

Will quickly took to the game, becoming the first in her immediate family to play hockey, or to even skate in an organized fashion. By the 10U age division, having received a free pair of used goalie pads, Will could focus seriously on her role in front of the net.

"It kind of just took off from there," Will said.

Will continued to switch positions, playing as a goalie for the 12U team while serving as a player for her 10U team. It was soon clear where her passion resided.

By middle school, Will was set on playing in college. An NCAA rule change meant that players could no longer be recruited by college programs as eighth graders, so any commitments had to wait until high school.

Will attended a Catholic all-girls high school, and their hockey players had to combine with those from other Catholic schools in the area to form a team. Will simultaneously played for the Buffalo Bisons youth team, through which she completed most of her training and college recruiting.

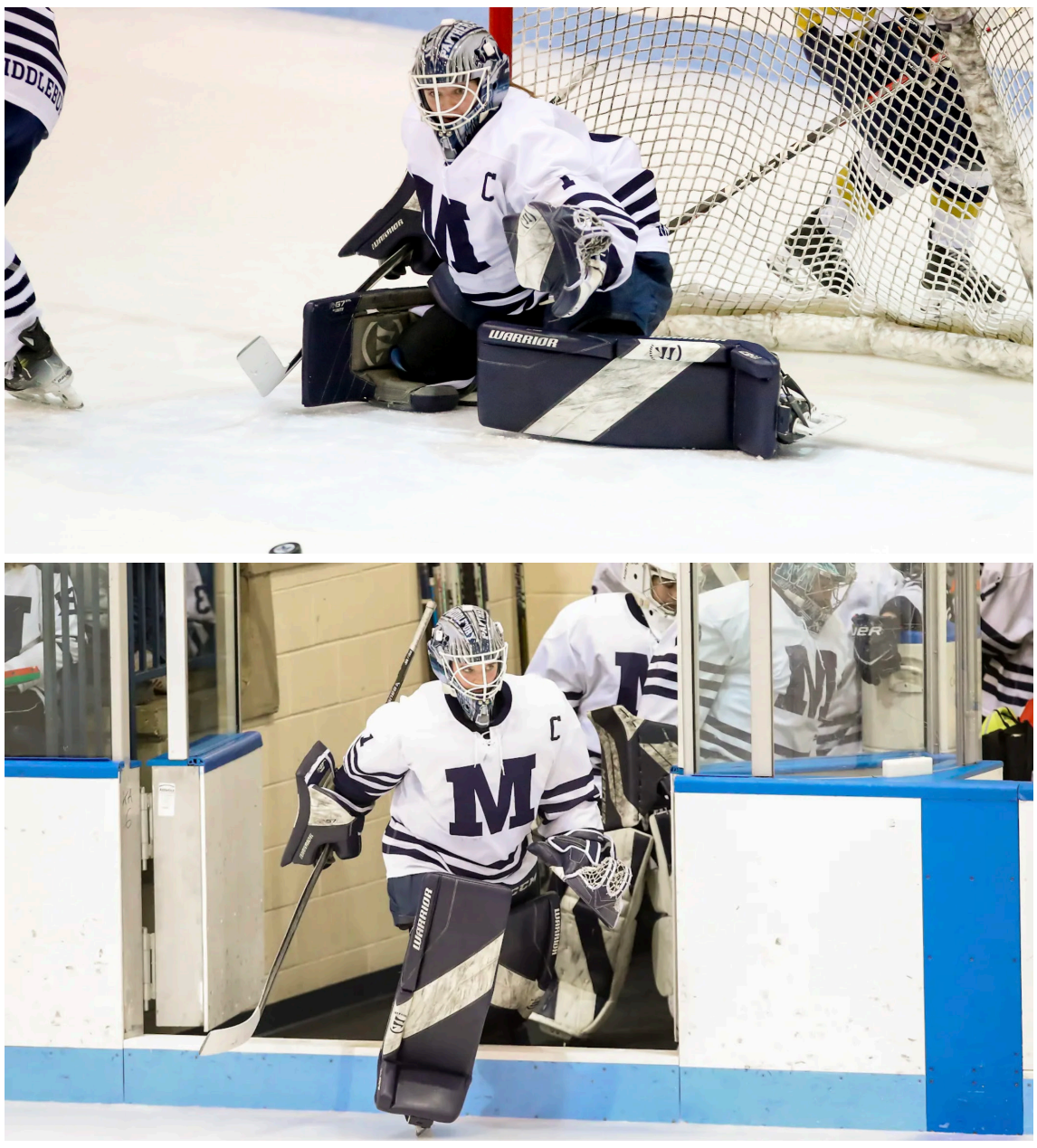
The Bisons' program fell apart during Covid-19. To be off the ice at length as a sophomore — the peak recruiting time for college hockey — was certainly a challenge, but Will was persistent. After training under numerous goalie coaches, who together brought a mix of Division I, NHL and Middlebury experience, Will committed to Middlebury in the summer of her junior year of high school.

After four years of Panther hockey, Will has continued to feel the same joy in front of the net that she did as a six-year-old in her house league, breaking numerous school records in the process. Along with her two records mentioned prior, Will's 581 saves this season made her the first Middlebury women's hockey goalie to pass the 500 mark in a single season.

"I had no idea I even broke that until Midd Athletics posted it on their Instagram," Will said.

As always, Will was preoccupied with the game — a theme in her hockey career. She lives for the competitive aspect, and when it comes to hockey, more is almost always better.

"Yeah, we lost [against Colby], but that game was probably one of the most fun games I've ever played. It was basically like playing two games back-to-back. Whenever we'd have a timeout or break, everyone on the bench was laughing and having fun," Will said.



COURTESY PHOTOS / WILL COSTELLO

Sophia Will '26 holds the records for most saves in a season and total career saves for the Middlebury women's hockey team.

Goalies in all sports face unique challenges, but being the sole player in front of the net doesn't faze Will.

"I kind of thrive off the pressure," Will said. "Maybe that's my goalie psycho mindset, but I love the games that we go into, and it's like 'this is going to be a tough game.' I would rather face 30-something shots than have a game where I face 10."

Facing 30 shots in a game does have its downsides, though. The body stings when a shot finds a gap in the pads, and the deflection of a puck off one's helmet is a uniquely unenviable experience.

"The worst is getting hit in your head," Will said. "Sometimes it smells like burnt rubber [and] you have to shake it off a little bit."

After one thousand, seven hundred seventeen saves, days worth of in-game competition and countless whiffs of burnt rubber, Will's career as a Panther has come to an end. Christy Picard '96, the prior career saves record holder, reached out to Will after the Colby game. Will hopes that one day she can pay it forward, too.

"Right now it's really cool that my name is in the record books, but I do hope that someday somebody comes in here and I can reach out to them and say 'congrats, that's insane, so proud of you.'"

Will plans to take a short break from hockey after college, but hometown charity games and beer league play are in the cards. For now, though, one part of her game is certain.

"I have been told that I'm one of the more normal goalies that people have played with, which I take as a compliment."

MIDDLEBURY WOMEN'S LACROSSE BEATS TRINITY, REMAINS UNDEFEATED

By THIE HARTHONO
Sports Editor

The Middlebury women's lacrosse team defeated #24 Trinity College 10-4 on Saturday, Mar. 14 at Peter Kohn Field. With the win, the Panthers maintain their spot at the top of the national rankings and improve their record to 5–0.

Expectations are high for a team that has won the last five national titles. But with a roster that saw 14 players graduate in the spring of 2025, roles need to be filled, and pressure needs to be managed to replicate their national success.

"We try to give our players grace in moments so that they're not feeling compounding pressure and just look at their moments to learn," head coach Kate Livesay '03 said. "We hope that those lessons add up as we go through the season."

"I think for us, we're always managing that expectation," Livesay added. "We win by staying really present and just preparing for who's next."

Middlebury opened the score with just over three minutes played. Maddie Ackerman's '27 quick stick found the back of the net, assisted by Caroline Adams '26. Two minutes later, Adams assisted again, setting up Siobhan Colin '28 for a spinning finish. Adams herself scored the Panthers' third goal, darting down the left channel and tucking the ball into the back of the net.

COURTESY PHOTO / ANNICA NASSIRY

Posting a career game, Caroline Adams '26 finished with five assists and three goals against Trinity.

Trinity opened their tally two minutes into the second period. Yet the Panthers responded just 57 seconds later, pushing the advantage back to three. This time, it was Adams and Skylar Lach '26 who combined for the goal. Middlebury maintained the pressure, as Haley Hamilton '26 won the draw, orienting the Panthers back on the attack. Colin then made it 5-1, ripping her shot into the right side of the goal.

The Bantams got another one back, firing a bouncing shot into the goal. Middlebury responded once more, a little less than two minutes before the break. Maeve Lee's '28 shot found the back of the net, assisted by Lach from behind the net. The Panthers held a comfortable 6-2 lead heading into the break.

Middlebury kept up its momentum in the third period, putting the game all but out of reach. Adams scored from a free-position — the result of a Trinity foul — three minutes into the restart. Trinity closed the gap to four goals before the Panthers piled on two more. Hamilton fired home from the right flank for her 18th goal of the campaign, before Adams won the draw, charged down the field and put the ball past the Bantams' goalie to complete her hat-trick. The goals came just 13 seconds apart from one another.

Colin completed her hat trick just under 90 seconds into the final period, pushing the advantage to 10-3. Trinity was awarded a free-position shot three minutes later, converting the penalty for their fourth score of the game. The visitors pressed hard to close the deficit, but Middlebury's defense held fast, and Elizabeth Savage '27 completed her first full game in goal with a handful of crucial stops.

Adams' eight points (three goals, five assists) were a career high, and Colin tallied her first hat trick as a Panther. Savage notched a season-best seven saves, and the Panthers stayed on the attack for most of the first half thanks to a stellar midfield showing and Caroline Messer's career-high five forced turnovers. The Panthers also dominated on draw controls, winning 14-2.

Adams chalks up the team's success in draws to the work they put in at the gym, where they focus on wrist strength and quickness. "We are so fortunate to have our coach, Amy Patton, who knows so much about technique and strategy, helping us at every step," Adams said. "When it comes time for the game, all the hay is in the barn."

"[Forcing turnovers and winning draws] allowed us to have a few mistakes but feel good about the way that things were going and getting second chances on offense because we were working so hard to win the ball back," Livesay reflected.

Trinity is always a special matchup for Livesay, who coached the Bantams before returning to Middlebury. During her time in Hartford, Livesay led the Bantams to two conference titles and a national title. She remains the winningest coach in Trinity History.

"I really love and respect their coach, so it is a super special matchup," Livesay said. "But I always really want to do well against them, and I'm happy that we did."